



Family Christian Center

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CLASS NAME: Prep for Marriage – Enter the Marriage Garden Lesson 1: Grow A Pair!

SESSION: Sunday August 29, 2021 @ 11 A.M. Location: Zoom Conference

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How Do You Grow a Pair!?

When not everyone grows at the same pace

Often couples walk into marriage with the belief that simply because they love one another that they are on the same page. The hustle and bustle of wedding plans and the dreams of building a life together can overshadow a couples developing marital garden. Causing parts of their union not to receive the same amount of sunlight as needed. We have mentored countless couples that have become too distracted by wedding plans that they forget to discuss a balanced growth plan *for* and *with* their significant other. One in which both mates receive the adequate nutrients needed to have a long-term and successful marriage. Some may ask, why is this important? It is especially important in marriage because not everyone grows as the same pace.

How Do I Know if We Are Not Growing At the Same Pace?

Sometimes, whether one mate wants to admit it or not, they often already know if their mate or soon-to-be-spouse is equipped for the journey of marriage. However, the look of the *wedding day*, in some case, has become more important than the actual marriage. That is why premarital counseling as well as post-marital development towards marriage is not only needed but is vital in the success of a marriage. A pair of additional unbiased eyes can

help you and your mate grow a pair successfully towards marriage. We call these marital helpers' **groundskeepers**. During this cultivation period in your union, the Prep for Marriage team will begin to prepare you for the changing seasons that await your union. Our goal is to teach you to spot future pestilence, weed out invaders and help you establish boundary fences needed to keep your love in and the Enemy out!

Character Growth

Hebrews 5:12-14 New King James Version

Spiritual Immaturity

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the [a]oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are [b]of full age, that is, those who by reason of [c]use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Couples you may not be mature enough to eat the solid food of marriage. Some of you will be bottle fed, some of you will be spoon fed while others may need to be breast fed a little while longer until you can begin to eat adult marital food. Remember, everyone grows at their own pace and that is okay. Likewise, keep in mind that if you and your significant other are not growing at the same pace it can be difficult for either of you to truly be rooted in your marriage. Bear this in mind, to know marriage is to know God. Marriage is the first ordained relationship created by God. Jesus is the groom, and the church is his bride. Because Jesus loves the church so much, he sacrificed everything and died for her. Men are you ready to die for **your** bride? The first principles of marital character growth is to actually grow a pair! Are you ready to cultivate the atmosphere of love for your bride?

Time to Grow A Pair!

Grow A Pair definition: *(vulgar, idiomatic) To be brave; to show some courage, especially in a situation in which one has so far failed to do so.*

When hearing the statement **“Grow A Pair”** as it is used in the world. It means to man up and show that you are ready for the challenge. Men are you ready to lay down your life for a

friend? When that lifelong friend is also your wife? Are you up for the challenge? Can you, do it? If not...**GROW A PAIR!** Husbands, the success of your marriage depends on you. How a husband introduces love to his wife is what determines the outcome of their union. Covenant begins and ends with the continued adoration of the husband for his wife. Many men, including women believe the man's number 1 responsibility is to be a provider, the breadwinner, to bring home the bacon so to speak...No, the husband's number 1 priority is far more precious than that. Men, did you know that it is the man's ultimate responsibility to love his wife?

Ephesians 5:25

New King James Version

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

There have been so many men that have dropped the ball in this area. Believing the rules of society rather the ordinances of God. Men, you are supposed to cultivate and embody the very depths of intense intimate love with and for your wife until it grows and becomes next level! When you get to this stage of affection it is called **into-me-see**. To experience true **into-me-see** in marriage you must be a pro at love! What is into-me-see? It is when both spouses can be naked and not ashamed in marriage. All false pretenses are taken away and you and your spouse can be your true and authentic selves.

However, when a husband is loving **his** wife right...the kid gloves come off and **the** real husband shows up! When a husband has reached this stage of intimate understanding of his mate, he has reached **green thumb in love** status as a husband. Meaning that men of this stature project a love that cultivates, protects and is all-encompassing. Love that allows this husband's wife to be her true self and identify the soil of their marital garden as ripe and conducive for her to bloom. A *real* man knows how to love his wife, isn't afraid to be vulnerable, to lay his soul bare, to utilize active communication to knock down barriers to entry, nor is he afraid to love his spouse inside and out...and we are not talking sexually, either. To be clear, covenant sex is the reward to marriage. The world has attempted for far too long to claim what rightfully belongs to covenant marriages. Great sex is the icing on the marital cake however it is not the key ingredient!

The Fruits of Your Labor!

A Man's Fruit is his Wife's Submission...

Proverbs 18:22

New King James Version

²² He who finds a wife finds a good thing,

And obtains favor from the LORD.

Understanding the gender roles within your marital garden is essential in blossoming not only romance in your marriage but increasing and defining foundational love as well. Love is not something that just happens overnight nor is the ability to pick the perfect mate. That is why God is the author and finisher of our fates. He knows the “number of hairs on your head” and “knitted you together when you were in your mother’s womb”. It makes sense, that he naturally knows the exact character measurements and emotional design of the perfect mates for us. However, in modern relationships impatience has taken the place of God’s perfect will; causing the mate selection process to drastically move out of Godly order such as, moving in before marriage, sex before marriage, children prior to commitment, and lust before love.

Condemnation versus Conviction

To be clear, no one is perfect and statements such as these are not meant to condemn you or your mate if you have stepped out of Godly order in your relationship, these statements or Godly convictions are stated to remind you that God has your best intentions in mind, and He has from the moment he created you! He knows what you need, and he knows what you want! Trust in the Lord with all your heart that he will provide a helpmate that is suitable to you.

Genesis 2:18 Amplified Bible

¹⁸ Now the LORD God said, “It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] ^[a]suitable *and* complementary for him.”

A Blossom in Your Garden

How A Wife's Submission Comes into Fruition

“You’re not alone in wondering how to interpret biblical submission in marriage. It’s a touchy subject, not least because it’s often misunderstood as being sexist or no-matter-what obedience. Add in our Western culture — where a me-focused lifestyle is easy to come by — and the internal and external conflict you described is real.

A closer look at Scripture, though, shows the full picture of marriage: a relationship that mirrors the love between Christ and His Church. When a husband submits to the Lord, leading his wife with a servant’s heart and nurturing her God-given talents, she can confidently submit to him — lean on him and trust his covering. That will always be relevant”.

The Submissions of Wives to Husbands | Author: Focus on the Family

Ephesians 5:22-24

Amplified Bible

Marriage Like Christ and the Church

²² Wives, be *subject* ^[a]to your own husbands, as [a service] to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives should be subject to their husbands in everything [respecting both their position as protector and their responsibility to God as head of the house].

How to Increase Marital Garden Yields?

As a wife, the best way for submission to bloom in your marital garden is understanding that the word “*submission*” is not a bad word. Submit means *to give over or yield to the power or authority of another*”. It does not mean that you as a woman are inferior, Ephesians 5:22-24 lays out the line of succession, in marriage, the heavenly hierarchy of the household. However, to be clear submission is not domineering either.

The truth is many wives would feel more confident in submitting to their spouses if their husbands cultivated the atmosphere of love around them better. Meaning, sometimes it is hard to submit to being led down the garden path if you do not trust where your husband is leading you to. Wives need a destination, a growth plan to understand where the future of their relationship is going. It is essential to a wife to know where she stands in her marriage, this cannot be a mystery. A flourishing marital garden must be rooted in submission to gain submission. In Ephesians 5:21, it states, submit (or yield) to one another out of reverence for the Lord.” This is where husbands and wives must water their marital gardens with “yielding” communication. As co-heirs to the throne of grace, make your feelings known to one another. Be “Naked and Not Ashamed” in your marital garden and tell each other what you need to feel safe. Submission in this context also mirrors Christ love for the church. Submission simply means “respect”. Wives, will you respect your husbands’ position in the household as initiator of love, as protector and as the spiritual head of your family? If you cannot...then why get married?

Not Every Marriage Will Bloom

To truly count the cost of marriage, understand marriage is not for the faint of heart. You must be battle tested. You must have thick skin and essentially **grow a pair** to make it work! Look around the room of class attendees today. Examine, each couple’s face. The reality is not everyone is going to make it to the end of their marital journey. We encourage each of you to count out loud, together, to the number 13.

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13...

Why, every 13 seconds there is 1 divorce in America (w-f lawyers/statistics and facts). What is even worse is that **“there are 9 divorces in the time it takes for a couple to recite their wedding vows (2 minutes).”**

The truth is not every couple that enters this class will move on to marriage and worse those that do get married will not stay married. Our goal, is to prevent this under the guidance of the Lord. We are here to break you up! Yes, we said it and we mean it! Why? We would rather break you up now rather than watch you feel the painful sting of divorce. Divorce is

the death of a living relationship. Keep in mind, if you cannot take what we are throwing at you in class then you are not ready for marriage. Real marriage is more difficult than the many layers that we will present over the next 11 weeks.

Face Planted

Please understand we are here to help you comprehend the magnitude of the relationship you seek. Also to help you realize that there are hard and difficult times in front of you. However, you can win! If you are willing to put in the work, and put God first in your marriage, you will not only survive...you will thrive in marriage! However, our goal for each of you today is to throw everything including the kitchen sink at you to ensure you are ready to grow in marriage. Many times, couples walk into marriage unskilled, ill-prepared for the challenges that are involved in marriage. Mainly, because that just do not know what they are getting themselves into. Marriage is a beautiful thing! It is awe-inspiring but it takes two to be successful. Because one mate doesn't always pull their own weight leaving their own mates and their marriages defenseless. Often sucker punched by the first obstacles of trepidation their union may face. Thus, becoming **face-planted** by the first offense that attacks their idealism of marriage. We encourage you not to be another statistic.

Equally Yoked Mandate

In the Bible, the apostle Paul explained being unequally yoked to unbelievers of Christ as having two oxen attached to a yoke (a wooden crosspiece attached to two animals) as an uneven match. The Amplified Bible refers to this as making mismatched alliances with unbelievers. Marriage is an ultimate alliance. Furthermore, to be linked to someone that does not match your marital weight causes not only resentment, but it drains the resources of the stronger mate while trying to pull the weight of a marriage. It's too large of a burden to bear.

Apostle Paul's Example

Picture this. Using Paul's example, one ox is tall, and the other is small. Better yet, imagine that one ox is stronger, and the other is weaker. Both are assigned an equal task to pull their own weight on the unbridled path to marriage. Do you really believe that the weaker ox is

doing its fair share? The answer is no! The reason is simple: the weaker ox is incapable of completing the task based on its own limited resources. It literally does not have the goods needed to complete the task at hand. Additionally, it benefits from this arrangement and can continue looking as if it's working hard when really, it's only along for the ride. The burden is laid solely on the stronger ox, who is clearly doing all the work and reaping none of the reward.

Uneven Growth

Now imagine a lifelong commitment called marriage—try pulling all the weight in that relationship! If you want to cripple faith in a steadfast believer, watch the aftereffect of an unequally yoked union. It's absolutely devastating to watch. According to Strong's, unequally yoked is derived from the root word heterozygous. This is a compound of: *héteros*, "another of a different kind" and *zygós*, "a yoke, joining two to a single plow" – properly, different kinds of people joined together but unevenly matched; hence "unequally yoked" (not aptly joined).

Take it a step further and recognize that this union is not only mismatched, but it's attaching or binding yourself to someone in marriage who is running contrary to faith. Why start your marriage off on the wrong foot? Imagine two individuals running in two different directions at a high rate of speed while tethered together. What would the aftereffect be? Both people would reach the end of their rope and come crashing back into one another, neither accomplishing anything. One would be too tired to fight and the other too stubborn to win. Is this what you want for your marriage?

Sunlight Garden versus Moonlight Garden

If you marry someone whose core beliefs are in complete opposition from your own, then expect toxic conflict. The Bible says it best: ***Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? (Amos 3:3 NKJV)***. Over the years, many new couples have misconstrued this Scripture reference, often believing that they must be in complete agreement with one another to be happily married. No, in fact, it doesn't mean absolute agreement. It simply means, for you and your mate, that if you are walking together, then you must have agreed to take the same path. This implies you agree to walk in the same direction but not in the same way.

So, it's fair to say that you have agreed to run the same marriage race by the obvious fact you are running it together. We encourage you to adjust—consider the earlier metaphor of starting off on the wrong foot. We urge you to take an even deeper look. Marrying an unbeliever is more like having one broken right foot in the race for your life.

Realize that throughout your “marriage race,” a broken right foot is a painful, cumbersome burden. Even more, the longer you attempt to stand upright injured, the less likely it is that right foot will be able to heal properly. Over time, it will become infected and will not only hold you back but will contaminate your entire bloodstream. We encourage you to be wise and recognize that some relationships, no matter how promising they appear to be, will never work—believers and nonbelievers are an unhealthy mix.

James 3:11-12

New International Version

¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

A Weed Disguised as a Seed

There's more to this. Do not believe that just because your mate identifies as a Christian, you are automatically equally yoked. The appearance of being equally yoked is by far the most dangerous illusion affecting modern couples and burgeoning relationships today. The appearance or the falsehood of legitimacy can place a new couple—faced with the weight of the world on their shoulders—left standing on thin ice.

For example, the belief that just because both you and your mate attend church services and have an understanding there is a God, somehow this means you are equally yoked. This a common mistaken understanding in new relationships. In fact, attending church services and stating the obvious fact that there is a God doesn't mean you believe in God. It simply means you know the address to the church, and you know that God resides there, but God does not reside in you.

Knowing that you can find the Lord in church but never having a relationship with the Lord of that church proves you are only an attender, not a member of the body of Christ. Sentiments of faith without active service in the body of Christ—including “I believe there is God” or “God knows my heart”—shows a lukewarm relationship with Christ. To be clear, understanding there is a God doesn’t prove spiritual maturity, nor does it provide a clearly defined individual relationship with Christ. It doesn’t mean that God is known to you, and most importantly, it doesn’t mean you are known to God. For example, in the book of John, the Lord explains the call of Christianity to a believer.

John 10:14

New King James Version

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

An online article written by Ada Chua, titled “Can a relationship be unequally yoked if we’re both Christians?” states:

But here’s possibly where the misconception starts: Being in an “equally yoked” relationship isn’t about the convenience of going for church service together, or being able to sing the same songs or use the same lingo.

Two professing Christians are still two broken human beings with the free will to pursue God—or not to. Simply wearing the label of Christianity does not give us a free pass to walking the three-legged race toward Christlikeness in perfect unity of mind and heart.

Additionally, the author noted the following:

I pray that the measure of our richness will not be wrongly determined by how often we go to church, how many Bible stories we know, or the leadership positions we hold in church—but by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives—manifested in a mutual reverence for the sovereign Lord, surrender to His will and selfless love for each other.

Void of Fruit

In all actuality, your mate can be a vacant attendee void of the fruit of the spirit, barren of understanding, and going through the motions to appease the believing mate prior to marriage.

Galatians 5:22-23

New King James Version

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ ^[a]gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

It is also quite possible that before today, the believing mate didn't know how to hold their significant other accountable. Inadvertently, the believer failed to create a standard of accountability for their beloved or themselves by allowing their mate not to consult the Lord with them in prayer, for allowing them not to read the Word of God, or for allowing their mate to fail to tithe—because they too are inconsistent in these areas as well.

That is the true litmus test of faith—when you can lovingly hold your significant other accountable for the ministry of your marriage. However, if you or your mate are weak in this area, you allow an opportunity for a chameleon like spirit to take hold and interfere with your blessings.

Unfortunately, this is how the bond between a true believer and an unbeliever is cultivated. When a believer is not in active belief, their standards plummet, and being with an unbeliever doesn't seem so bad in their own eyes.

It appeases their low spiritual self-esteem when they don't feel inadequate about their abandoned core beliefs. Hence, their standards lower, and they increasingly become more accepting of someone with unequally low beliefs in the Lord. This leaves the couple at a self-imposed disadvantage in marriage before it even begins.

Remember who the Master Gardener Is!

John 15

New International Version: The Vine and the Branches

15 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

Remember, before you can tend to your own garden, you must remember who has tended to your garden all your life...God, **the Master Gardner**. Remember and honor the God that made and cultivated you! Not giving honor where honor is due or by not recognizing the spiritual ecosystem that created and cultivated you. Not respecting the Lord's majesty, causes all your relationships to be cut off from the branches that bear your supply of *good fruit*. God calls husbands and wives to be fruitful and multiply. By not following God's direct command your marital resources become extinct.

- **Do you want a fruitless marriage?**
- **What does a fruitless marriage look like to you?**

Genesis 1:28

New King James Version

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, **"Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that ^[a]moves on the earth."**